

T H E C L E V E L A N D M U S E U M O F A R T



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ART EXECUTED IN MUSEUM'S LIFETIME MARKS THE BEGINNING OF GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY YEAR

To begin the celebration of its fiftieth year, The Cleveland Museum of Art will exhibit more than 150 works of art produced since 1916. The exhibition, FIFTY YEARS OF MODERN ART, opens June 15 and will close July 31.

The show was organized by the Museum's Curator of Contemporary Art, Edward B. Henning, from the collections of nearly 100 museums, galleries and private individuals, both here and abroad. It offers a kaleidoscopic view of a past half-century of paintings, and sculpture executed from 1916 to 1965 by 100 outstanding American and European artists ranging from Claude Monet to Kenneth Noland.

Mr. Henning divides the show (as well as the accompanying, illustrated book-catalog) into two chronological periods -- from 1916 to World War II and from World War II to now. The early section includes the emerging European styles that were a result of a 20-year burst of creativity at the beginning of the twentieth century. These especially include the tradition-attacking movements of dadaism and then surrealism, the products of a society disillusioned by World War I. There were also: cubism, with its demands for a formal order in art; a continuing expressionism, inclined toward more violently enunciated emotional romanticism; and non-representational art, introduced in 1910, and significantly developed after World War II. After the birth of surrealism no truly revolutionary changes occurred for twenty years; it was a time of consolidation and digestion. Braque, Mondrian, Rouault and Matisse, for example, worked on styles they had created earlier and Bonnard, Maillol, Lachaise and others produced more traditional works.

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The second part of the exhibition depicts a period that begins with another 20-year burst of creativity --- this time more vigorous, and based on some of the major ideas of the early 1900's. The Nazis had ended the avant-garde movement in Germany, leaving it an artistic wasteland, and had forced talent from middle Europe to England or the United States, although Matisse, Braque, Rouault, Léger, Chagall and Picasso did continue to dominate European art immediately after the war.

The surrealists came to the United States in large numbers, joining other well-known foreign artists already here, and greatly influenced the methodology and content of the new American art. Cubists offered a particular view about formal structure. There was, however, no unifying style and many artists strove along different lines; some firmly opposed all surrealist and expressionist aims and worked in purely abstract styles.

In 1940 the abstract expressionist school began to dominate most Western art, although artists like Davis, Tobey, Hopper and Dickinson in America and Dubuffet, Giacometti, Balthus and Henry Moore in Europe were creating in other important styles. Recently, there have been attacks on American abstract expressionism with a return to romantic figurative subjects, a re-emphasis on hard-edged, geometrical abstractions, and the phenomena of pop and op art.

Works in the show were selected on the basis of modern qualitative criteria and were considered both as carriers of generic traits shared with other, comparable works and as unique objects.

The exhibition, accordingly, is a judgement on the key artists of the past half-century and on key works produced by them. Therefore, whatever historical inferences exist must be considered only as incidental to an exhibition whose primary standard was the quality of the work of art chosen.



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART